

3/30/23

Good Afternoon Senate Finance Committee Members,

I am a resident of Warren and have recently been through what I would characterize as an unduly stressful and confusing process related to Verizon's proposal of a 140 foot hilltop cell tower. The cell tower was proposed to be sited in the midst of a residential neighborhood, and just 200 feet from a neighbor's property line. There was no clear rationale shared by Verizon for the site's selection, nor were there propagation maps or engineering schematics. Concerned residents were forced to operate in the dark; Verizon canceled 3 meetings with the town. I have supported H.70 and its requirements for specificity in the process related to the initial town notification. Knowing that H.70 did not make it out of committee, I'm hoping that 248a can be revised before coming to a vote.

I would like to explain that as a result of concerns re Verizon's Warren site selection and their lack of communication, I became involved with a group of Warren residents. We advocated for improved cell reception and simultaneously a thorough and thoughtful review process that would include such considerations as how to assure a tower height blends with surrounding tree canopy, that aesthetics make sense and don't jeopardize a community's economic stability, that adverse environmental impacts are avoided, and very importantly that a process is assured where all options for tower locations are weighed and the potential of tower co-location explored. This way a community has confidence that the final siting and plan reflects deliberation and is optimal. It's noteworthy that 400 plus of our Valley's community members signed petitions to assure such a process.

I would like to emphasize that 60 days does not give adequate time for residents to be notified and educated. In attending town board and committee meetings it was apparent that even our volunteer board members were not schooled in the 248a process. As concerned residents we scrambled to educate ourselves and the community at large and meanwhile the clock was ticking. Because Verizon did not submit full documentation of their intent with propagation maps and the like, it was difficult to identify their goals and plans. For example, we were not informed as to whether Verizon had done due diligence in investigating alternative sites and the community was not

given the opportunity to evaluate the impact of their proposed tower through a balloon test with proper public advance notification.

It's important to consider that rural town boards generally meet only every two weeks and in our case our boards were in the midst of budgeting, and also dealing with draft LUDRs among other things. Considering most members of our town boards were having a first experience with a cell tower application, they clearly needed time to get up to speed to understand the process, provide notice to abutters, and importantly to give the community the opportunity to be informed and weigh in. I strongly agree with the change suggested in H.70 from 60 to 80 days for public engagement prior to a telecommunications company's formal filing with the State. Because H.70 did not pass out of committee, I am asking that 24 please be amended.

With the telecommunications industry expanding it is my view that local communities are at a significant disadvantage. Companies have experience, expertise, lawyers, engineers, and are well-positioned to advocate for their proposals at town meetings. This sets up an unequal power dynamic that does not serve the local community well. Unless residents hire lawyers and engineers, it is difficult to formulate the right questions and understand what can be done in the event alternate tower locations might better serve the community while improving reception. For these reasons, additional requirements around public engagement are needed. It was helpful when the public service department lawyers met with our community to answer questions.

On a personal note I have a friend / abutter who lives on the Airport Road. She and her husband recently moved into a downsized house they'd built. If the tower proposal was approved, she and her husband felt they would have to put their new house on the market due to their health worries. And another family living very close by shared their anxiety related to their 3 young children's continuous exposure to radio frequency (RF). While we know there is no definitive agreement on health questions, there is significant peer reviewed research that raises serious concerns. As a health professional I would add that we are the first generation to be exposed to this increased level of radio frequency and there has not been time yet for long-term studies. In the meantime, even our own National Institute of Health has raised questions regarding carcinogenic effects of RF based on extensive animal studies. As town and state representatives whose job it is to safeguard our

communities, health consequences should not be ignored, even though they do not provide legal standing.

Sincerely, Connie Colman, Warren, VT